

Madam Speaker, today I am here to express my support of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. I would like to commend and indeed applaud my colleagues Congresswoman *Rosa DeLauro* and Chairman

*George Miller*

of the Education and Labor Committee for their tireless efforts in support of fair treatment in the workplace. Jobs are on everyone's mind, and I rise in support today of H.R. 11, not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because, for me, it is personal.

When our beloved mother, Anastasia, began work back in the middle of the last century as a counter waitress at a place called Liberty Lunch on Broadway in Toledo, Ohio, she did not even earn the minimum wage. And I will tell you what; she deserved it. That wage was only made possible by the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938. But even when that act passed, her vile boss would then cash her check and deduct the increase from her and pocket the money for himself. Sadly, stories of pay discrimination and inequity still reside across our country.

The Lilly Ledbetter bill is named after Lilly Ledbetter, who worked for almost 20 years at a Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company plant in Gadsden, Alabama. After finding out that she was the lowest paid supervisor at the plant where she worked, despite the fact that she had more experience than her male counterparts, Lilly sued Goodyear for unlawfully discriminating against her based on gender.

A jury found in her favor, but, of course, Goodyear, which has deep pockets and in fact is a defense contractor of our country, went to court. In fact, they had the money to go all the way to the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Court ruled in favor not of Lilly, but of Goodyear.

The Court cited the reason being that the time limit for her claim had passed as the initial discrimination happened nearly 20 years earlier. However, Lilly Ledbetter filed her charge as soon as she learned of the pay discrimination. It was not her fault that it took almost 20 years to learn of her situation.

The United States Supreme Court's decision changes the law, limiting any action to 180 days after the first incident of discriminatory activity. In such cases as Lilly Ledbetter's, it took nearly 20 years to have the discrimination come to light. This decision limits the ability of any employee to challenge discriminatory pay.

H.R. 11 will restore the law and justice by clarifying that each paycheck resulting from a

discriminatory pay decision would constitute a new violation of the employment nondiscrimination law and reset the 180-day clock.

Employees do not go around asking each other how much money they earn on each paycheck. In fact, many employers even explicitly prohibit such conversations. It is not like working for Congress, where our pay is public record. In addition, who would want to go around when they are at a new job and ask new coworkers their income and level of work experience as well as other data to evaluate if one's own pay is fair, knowing you have 180 days from your first paycheck to file with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission? Who would want to start a job like that?

Most new employees are more focused on doing their job and working hard and performing well so that he or she can keep their new position and continue to earn paychecks. In today's climate, an income is more critical than worrying about pay discrimination, but that too should not allow this practice to continue.

We cannot allow employers to hide behind a mere 180 days and potentially successfully carry out pay discrimination day after day.

Madam Speaker, that is why I'm an original cosponsor of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. It's in memory of our own mother. This bill is not only about pay discrimination on the basis of gender, but also race, religion, national origin, disability or age. This bill is about doing the right thing to protect the hardworking people of this Nation.

I urge my colleagues to support this important bill as we begin the 111th Congress, and I want to thank Lilly Ledbetter for her life and for the life of working-class women and men across this country.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity today to support the Lilly Ledbetter Act of 2009, H.R. 11.